THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) to (e) Exploration activities have been carried out in Rajasthan by ONGC, OIL and private/JV companies for a long time. These activities have led to establishment of oil and gas reserves in Barmer, Jalore, Jaisalmer and Bikaner districts of Rajasthan.

Exploration work in six blocks is being carried out in the districts of Jaisalmer, Barmer, Jodhpur, Ganga Nagar, Churu and Bikaner.

In the exploration blocks awarded under Production Sharing Contracts, no investment is made by the Government. Successful bidders make all the investment, which is cost recoverable, if any hydrocarbon discovery is put on commercial production. However, companies have, so far, made an investment of approx. Rs. 900 crores in exploration of oil and gas in Rajasthan.

Identification of new oil fields

679. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of new oil fields which have so far been identified by Government and found viable for commercial production in the country, State-wise;

(b) the number of oil fields where production has since been started and in how many cases Government freezed production programme; and

(c) what is total quantity of crude oil extracted from new wells, State-wise till date?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) to (c) During the last three years (2003-2006), Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, Oil India Limited and Private/Joint Venture companies have made 35 hydrocarbon discoveries, of which, 22 oil and gas discoveries were found to be viable for commercial production. Remaining discoveries are under assessment. The State-wise break-up of these discoveries is as under:—

Andhra Pradesh	1
Assam	13
Gujarat	4
Rajasthan	4
TOTAL:	22

As per the oil and gas exploration and production project cycles, hydrocarbon discoveries are to be appraised to assess production potential. Normally, hydrocarbon discoveries take 5 to 7 years to come on production, based on technical and commercial consideration.

Generation of employment through tourism

†680. SHRI MAHENDRA SAHNI: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are formulating any policy to encourage employment in tourism across the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of efforts made for achieving excellency in tourism?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) and (b) The existing National Tourism Policy of the Government recognizes the role of employment creation through tourism. It aims at positioning tourism as a major engine of economic growth and harnessing its direct and multiplier effects for employment generation. The Policy also seeks to enhance employment potential within the tourism sector and provides broad strategies to achieve this objective.

(c) The Government has undertaken a number of steps for achieving excellence in tourism such as:-

- positioning and maintaining tourism development as a national priority;
- enhancing India's competitiveness as a tourism destination in the international markert;
- improving and expanding existing products and their development such as cultural and heritage tourism, rural tourism, adventure tourism, health and healing tourism, fairs and festivals, etc.;
- creation of tourism infrastructure by providing Central financial assistance to the State/UT Governments under its various schemes; and
- effective modern and competitive marketing strategy to position India as a unique destination through centralized electronic media

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.